

RIO PARALYMPIC GAMES — WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ATHLETES

812. Mr I.M. BRITZA to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

I understand our state welcomed home its Paralympians today. Can the minister update the house on their performance in Rio?

Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:

I thank the member for the question. I understand that he has a keen interest in at the Paralympics, having had a niece who participated in a previous Paralympics as an equestrian. Thank you very much for the question.

Lord Mayor Lisa Scaffidi and I, along with Kate McLoughlin, who was the chef de mission for the Australian Paralympic team, were in the city centre today welcoming home our Paralympians. We joined a number of community members to welcome them back to Western Australia. We were all incredibly proud of the 18 who represented our state on this world stage, and I congratulate, on behalf of the government and the Western Australian public, those who supported those athletes to get to this pinnacle event. To have brought back six medals to Western Australia—two gold, two silver and two bronze—was an outstanding effort. It was an incredible effort, especially considering how competitive the Paralympics have become in recent decades. Sailing gold went to Colin Harrison and Russell Boaden; Madison de Rozario was a dual athletics silver medallist; swimming silver went to Madeleine Scott; and athletic bronzes went to Ella Pardy and Chad Perris.

We sit back in the comfort of our lounge rooms and watch this two-week window on those athletes performing at their best, in the moment they get every four years. We do not see the grit, determination and personal effort they put in, and the sacrifice by their friends, their family and themselves to get to that point. For us to be able to welcome them back, whether they were medallists or not, is an incredibly important moment for them. This was the last leg for the Paralympics committee in Western Australia. We have had an enormous year in both the Olympics and the Paralympics. We saw some wonderful highlights and some real disappointments. Brant Garvey, an Albany boy whom many people would be aware of, was a real hot favourite to win a medal, but unfortunately he injured himself.

Mr P.B. Watson: He pulled a muscle in his good leg.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: He did, but that is the nature of sport, is it not, member for Albany? They get one chance when they find themselves on that world stage. To his great credit, Brant Garvey finished the race, and said it was still one of the most amazing things that he had ever been a part of. That is what the Olympics and the Paralympics are about. The other highlight was Western Australian Brad Ness as the Australian flag bearer. He is a Western Australian boy from the bush, an amazing athlete who has mentored many athletes in his time. He is a five-time Paralympian and he continues to be heavily involved in the sport in which he is such a champion—wheelchair basketball.

It was wonderful to be there with the public today to welcome them back and to see the acclamation and adulation from those who came into the city. It was a great delight to join them, celebrate with them at reaching their goal, and wish them all the very best as they pursue their next goal, whether it be the Commonwealth Games or Tokyo in 2020, or any other international sporting event they pursue. They are true champions and heroes in many people's eyes.